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Artist Interview アーティスト・インタビュー

Traditional Kyoto Dance Artist Yasuko Inoue and her vision as a young successor of the art

若き後継者の視線
京舞井上流の井上安寿子

Profile

Yasuko Inoue

Born 1988. Her father is Tetsunojou Kanze IX, successor to the Kanze school of Noh and her mother is Yachiyo Inoue, the fifth successor to the Inoue school of *Kyomai* (traditional Kyoto Geiko/Maiko dance). She began training in Inoue school dance at the age of two under her great-grandmother, Yachiyo Inoue IV, and her mother, Yachiyo Inoue V. Her first stage performance was at the age of three (Kamigata piece "Shichi Fuku-jin") at the "Yachiyo Inoue IV 88th Birthday Celebration." In 2006, she was named successor to the Inoue school of dance at the age of 17. In 2011, she graduated from the Kyoto University of Art and Design. In 2013, Inoue started her own dance organization, "Yoyo no Kai." And in 2015 she became a dance instructor at Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen, a school run by the Gion Girls' Art School. Inoue is a member of the Japanese Classical Dance Association (Nihon Buyou Kyokai). Inoue also serves as a special instructor at Kyoto University of Art and Design.

Katayama School Noh, Kyomai Preservation Foundation

<http://www.arc.ritsumei.ac.jp/k-kanze/>

Traditional Kyoto dance of the Inoue school is the style of dance long performed by the trained Geiko (Geisha) and Maiko (apprentice Geisha) of the Gion Kobu district, the traditional Geisha quarter of Kyoto. Since this style was established as a school of dance in the Edo Period (1603 to 1868) with influences from Kamigata dance, Noh and the dance of the puppets in Joruri puppet performance, etc., this style of dance has been taught by a succession of female dance artists/instructors from generation to generation. Yasuko Inoue (b. 1988) is the young successor to this line. Raised in a family where her mother, Yachiyo Inoue, is a Living National Treasure who carried on the tradition through the dramatic social changes of her time, and her father is Tetsunojou Kanze IX, successor to the Kanze school of Noh, Inoue spoke with us about her vision of the world of Inoue-school dance.

Interviewer: Yuichi Kinoshita, director and dramaturge of the Kinoshita-Kabuki

The Inoue school is unique in the world of *Nihon Buyo* (traditional/classical Japanese dance). In 2013, we were able to see the publication of a big book "Birth of the Inoue School of Kyomai" (written by Mariko Okada) that traced the history of the school in detail. The Inoue style is the only dance form studied by the apprentice Geiko (Geisha) and Maiko of the Gion Kobu district, the traditional Geisha quarter of Kyoto, and it was the Inoue school that created Kyoto's traditional spring "Miyako Odori" dance festival in the Meiji Period. As your upperclassman by a couple of years in the Performing Arts Department at Kyoto University of Art and Design, I have known you for some time. I remember once at university when you were preparing for a performance, I saw you climbing way up over the stage to hang lights, and it had me quite worried. "What if something happened to the successor to the Inoue school?" I was thinking as I watched you up there, and inside I was really nervous (laughs).

Yes, I remember that happening (laughs). It seems to me that more often than not it was I who was needing peoples' help, but I am thankful for the time I had at university, because it gave me the opportunity to meet so many people with different backgrounds. Originally, I was a very shy person. But if you don't meet and have exchanges with a lot of people, you don't gain anything new. So I became more outgoing, and in that sense I feel that being in the university environment was good for me.

Since I was little I was used to having people around me praise me for being a hard

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worker, and when I finished high school I naturally assumed I would be entering the world of dance full-time. So, when my mother asked me what I would do about college, it surprised me. But I realized that that was an option, and I ended up being able to go to Kyoto University of Art and Design. When Masae Inoue, who was the leading disciple of Yachiyo Inoue IV, asked me how long it would be before I graduated, I realized she wanted me to enter the world of dance as soon as possible, so I'm afraid that I disappointed her by going to college.

Why did you decide to enter the Performing Arts department?

I knew that in the future I would be performing on stages, so I wanted to learn about how a stage performance is actually created. That is why I chose a department where I could learn about the backstage work that goes into creating a stage production. I had gone to see dance and theater performances, but I didn't know how they were put together and run. I decided that [at university] I wanted to learn about these things in detail.

The Inoue school of Kyomai is a deeply tied to Noh/Kyogen, both the third and fourth successors to the Inoue school were married to masters of the Kanze school of Noh, and your father is also the Noh artist Tetsunojou Kanze IX. And, with your first stage performance at the age of three, you have been immersed in the performing art of Kyomai since before you knew anything of the world. Besides the training you received in Inoue Kyomai, what other arts did you study?

I began studying the *shamisen* (Japanese 3-stringed instrument resembling a banjo) when I was middle school, and after a while I was learning the *o-hayashi* the musical accompaniment to Noh, classical Japanese dance and other arts). To this day I continue to take lessons in *o-hayashi* and *nagauta* (Japanese classical music with recitation). Since I was a child I have been taught Noh by my grandfather (Yusetsu Katayama) and my uncle (Kuroemon Katayama X), but because they were both busy with their own performances, it wasn't really training on a regular basis, but just having a lesson from time to time when they had some free time. When I was a child, I performed on stage in child roles several times. In our Inoue style of dance we sometimes use the same kind of walking method used in Noh, so I guess doing it was a good way to learn how to apply strength in the abdomen in the proper way.

The Inoue school of Kyomai was started in the Edo Period by Inoue Sato, and the school has been carried on by a succession of women [master] artists generation after generation. Both your great-grandmother, Yachiyo Inoue IV, and your mother, the fifth successor of the school, have been designated Living National Treasure by the Japanese government.

Yes. Sato was born in 1767, and it appears that when she was young it was possible to get elementary lessons in dance from the local masters in town. I have heard that Sato was able to enter into the service of one of the noble families, the Konoe family, to receive training in the social graces and arts worthy of upper-class bride, so she was exposed to classical arts like Noh and *Shirabyoshi* (classical singing and dancing dating back to the Heian Period), and it was that foundation that she based the Inoue style school of dance. This is just hearsay that was passed down verbally, so I don't

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know how much of it is actually based in truth (laughs). The Konoe family treated her very kindly and encouraged her artistic endeavors, and for this reason she was able to stay in the family service to the age of 31, far passed the normal age for a young lady in a family's service, and then she was allowed to leave the family's service. After that, the Konoe family and other noble families continued to help Sato and she eventually she became a teacher of dance in the Shimabara Geisha district of Kyoto. Since this was the only pleasure district licensed by the government in Kyoto, we are told that her teaching was appropriately valued.

When Sato left the Konoe family service, she was given words of parting by the elderly matron she had served directly, Minamioji Tsurue, who said, "I will not forget you for as long as the camellia tree flourishes." In the world of classical Waka poetry that was central to the culture of the noble families of the day, the camellia tree is a symbol of longevity because it is said to have the vitality to live eight thousand years. This led Sato to later take the two characters for eight thousand (*yachi* in Japanese) to make her artist's name Inoue Yachiyo. This is why the camellia is the symbol flower of our Inoue school and why the Inoue school crest is the *lbishi* (diamond pattern) crest given to the founder of the Inoue style by the Konoe matron. Also, when an apprentice of the Inoue school is granted a name (and thus a license to teach Inoue school dance), they always receive a camellia pattern ceremonial fan.

The second successor to the Inoue style (birth name: Inoue Aya) was the daughter of the older brother (Confucian scholar Inoue Keisuke) of the Inoue style's founder Inoue Sato (Yachiyo), in other words the second-generation successor was the founder's niece, whom she later adopted.

We are told that most of the Inoue style of dance was created by the founder (Sato) and her niece (Aya) who succeeded her. The contribution of the later is that she brought in forms and movements from puppet *yoruri* (Bunraku) performance. Furthermore, it is said that Aya was deeply influenced by Nomura Sanjiro of the Kongo school of Noh, and therefore introduced elements of Noh. She is said to have modeled herself after him in an era when it was almost never permitted for women to study under men, especially in the art of Noh, but since it is not the type of dance that can be imitated at the choreographic level without some instruction, I think she must have gotten a sufficient level of instruction in the fundamentals of Noh dance. Although the 2nd-generation successor (Aya) isn't talked about much, when I think about it, it is quite an accomplishment that she was able to contribute significantly to the creation of the foundation and qualities of our Inoue style. And it is in this way that the Inoue school built its dance repertoire. There was not much of an age difference between the founder (Sato) and her niece and successor (Aya) and it appears that they were quite good friends and fellow artists, so it is said that the transition of the art from teacher to apprentice was a smooth process.

According to the documents that remain, it appears that the 1st (founder), 2nd and 3rd generation successors of the Inoue school actually lived together for a period of time.

The 3rd-generation successor (birth name: Yoshizumi Haruko) was originally the daughter of a merchant family in the Sumiyoshi district of Osaka. She was a child of

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*Shimogawara

This is the area of Kyoto where Toyotomi Hideyoshi's legal wife, Kitanomandokoro, had Kodaiji Temple built and took the name Kodaiin Kogetsuni when she became a nun and lived there in her later years. At that time, women skill in the Geiko and Maiko arts moved to the area. After Kodaiin died, these women of the town became known as Yamaneko Geishas, and this was the start of the *Hanamachi* pleasure district. Subsequently it became one of the quarters officially licensed to do business under the Shimabara authority.

*Yachiyo Inoue III (1838 – 1938)

Her real name was Haruko Katayama (maiden name Haruko Yoshizumi). Born the second daughter of Yoshizumi Hikobee, of the Osaka family that owned the company Osaka Sumiyoshi. She studied dance under Sato and Aya and was given the Inoue name (artists name: Inoue Haru) and became successor to the school. Her husband was Katayama Kuroemon VI of the Kanze school of Noh. In 1872, she choreographed the first of what would become the Miyako Odori for the 1st Kyoto Cultural Exhibition, making it a large-scale group dance performance different from what had been until that time the small rental tea room Geisha dance art. With this success, the Inoue school became the established school of Gion and would remain there for the generations to come as the exclusive school of dance officially allowed in Gion.

*The play *Kyomai*

This play by Hideji Hojo premiered at the Meiji-za theater in 1960. The play focuses on the later years of Yachiyo Inoue III (age 82 to 101) and depicts the life of the classical dance artists with scenes like Yachiyo strictly teaching her disciple Aiko (Inoue IV).

a family that did business under the company name of Osaka-ya, and after moving to the Nijo area of Kyoto, she was taught the fundamentals of dance by a local teacher, and they say that since she showed a talent for dance, her teacher brought her to begin an apprenticeship under Inoue Sato and Aya. That meant that she was being taught by both and surely absorbed a lot as a result. Among her greatest accomplishments was being selected to choreograph for the “Miyako Odori” festival (written at the time with the two characters for *miyako* (the old capital Kyoto) and *odori* (dance)), which was a grand-scale dance performance by the Geisha and Maiko of the Gion Kobu Hanamachi district, and her choreography made it a great success. This strengthened the relationship between the ensuing Inoue school and the Gion district. Also, she became the first apprentice of our school to receive an Inoue artist's name and thus become a master teacher in her own right.

So, she was the first apprentice of the Inoue style to receive the Inoue name.

That's right. It was probably from this point that you might say the Inoue style became a “school” that would be organized for the purpose of teaching. The transition from what had been a family art taught just within a certain district (pleasure quarter) now became a school authorized to teach to people outside these limitations thanks to the contributions of the 3rd-generation successor (Yoshizumi Haruko).

So what we see is the Inoue style being established by the founder (Sato) and the first successor (Aya) and then the next successor [Haruko] expanding the influence of what would become the Inoue school by establishing the Miyako Odori tradition.

Yes. Due to the abandonment of the plans for the reconstruction of Kyoto with the transfer of the capital to Tokyo at the beginning of the Meiji Period, an exposition was planned for the year 1872. The first small-scale Miyako Odori was said to have been held at an establishment named Matsu-no-je at the time. At the time, it appears that there were a lot of Geisha in the area of Gion's Ishidanshita in front of Yasaka Shrine and at Shimogawara(*) that were called Yamaneko Geisha. We are told that [Haruko] choreographed the Miyako Odori for these Yamaneko Geisha and others based on dances like the Kamenoko Odori dance of Ise Furuichi in which the dancers danced in a line using *uchiwa* fans.

When we look at photographs of the 3rd-generation successor (Inoue III*), she seems to have been quite a large-framed woman. And we hear that she lived to the age of 101, and that even in her old age she ate hearty foods like minced meatballs.

We hear that she also liked spaghetti and that she called beer “medicine” and drank it before giving lessons (laughs). She also liked Sumo wrestlers and we hear anecdotes about how mad she would get when one of the wrestlers she sponsored lost a match, and there are a number of other episodes depicted in the play “Kyomai”(*) that takes the 3rd-generation successor (Haruko) as its main character.

Another thing that makes the Inoue school unique is that it has been carried on solely by female successors, and another unique thing is that the succession was not always be bloodline. The second successor (3rd-generation head of the school) was a woman from Osaka and the 4th-generation successor was a Maiko (apprentice

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*Yachiyo Inoue IV (1905 – 2004)

Her real name was Aiko Katayama. Debuted as a Maiko at the age of 10, and at the age of 13 was adopted as the daughter of Yachiyo Inoue III and became an inner-circle apprentice of the Inoue school. She received her artist name if Aiko Inoue at the age of 14, and in 1923 she became an instructor of classical dance at the Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen. Her husband was the grandson of Inoue III, Hiromichi Katayama (Kurouemon Katayama VIII) of the Kanze school of Noh. Along with Inoue III's senior disciple Sada Matsumoto she led the way to a flourishing of the Inoue school. She was eventually named a Living National Treasure by the government.

* Yachiyo Inoue V (1956 –)

Her real name is Michiko Kanze. Her grandmother is Yachiyo Inoue IV and her father is Kurouemon Katayama IX of the Kanze school of Noh and her younger brother is Kurouemon Katayama X. Her husband is Tetsunojo Kanze IX of the Kanze school of Noh. She was apprenticed to her grandmother, and in 1975 she became an instructor of classical dance at the Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen. She is named a Living National Treasure by the government.

Geisha) who learned dance as part of her training originally with Sata Matsumoto, a disciple of the 3rd-generation Inoue school successor, and subsequently brought her to the school.

My great-great-grandmother was a Maiko whose talent at dancing blossomed after she became an apprentice of the Inoue school and then she became its successor and then became its successor and led the school through the difficult times of World War II until it was taken over by the 5th-generation successor.

When I was a student, the 5th-generation successor of the Inoue school, Yachiyo-sensei, came to our university to do a performance of traditional Kyomai dance, and for the students like us who had never seen classical Japanese dance before, some said it had the feeling of contemporary dance. The 3rd and 4th Inoue school successors had very different physiques and were not blood relatives, and since that meant that they were dancers whose dance was, in that sense, a dialogue with their own bodies, I believe that must be the reason that it had the flavor of contemporary dance for the students.

The Inoue school's 3rd, 4th and 5th successors, and myself as well, all have had different physiques. So, there are some movements that Inoue IV could do seemingly without effort that I just couldn't imitate. I think that Inoue IV changed her dance as her age progressed. The process of constantly finding movement that fits your body as it is now, that is something that I think Inoue IV was a person who was able to do that naturally. Of course this is something that you can probably do because you know how to use your own body. It seems that when she was younger her movement was quite vigorous, so that you might perhaps call it closer to [constant] dancing (*odori*) rather than [artistically choreographed] dance (*mai*).

In her later years, you might say that Inoue IV's dance was rather slow, and it gave the impression that she was hardly moving at all, but it was quite vigorous movement when she was young, was it?

In fact the most strenuous form of movement is to suddenly perform a smooth movement from a state in which you gave the impression that you weren't moving at all. Because that puts stress on the body, moving slowly has a different kind of strain from moving quickly. In the end, if the abdomen isn't fixed, you can't do any type of movement [properly].

It seems that the creativity of the founder (Inoue Sato) was that of the creator of a new form of dance, while the creativity of Inoue II was an inward-facing creativity that created the style of that dance, and Inoue III's was an outward-facing creativity that established the school as an organization and Inoue IV's creativity was that of establishing how the choreography would be carried on and how to use her body and pass the art on to the next generation. In this sense, it seems to me that they each had their own innovative contributions and roles in the school.

With Inoue IV, she of course had the role of increasing the repertoire of choreography, but besides that I think she was constantly thinking about how you take what you have learned from your teacher—who is of course a different person from yourself—

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and how you care for that heritage and pass it on to the next generation. In the era of Inoue II, the best way for a dance artist to establish their name as a dancer was to become a choreographer for Kabuki. While the Inoue school did copy down the choreography of Takechi Kabuki and the like, they never tried actively to become Kabuki choreographers. The Inoue school remained a line of female artists and they never choreographed for the female roles (performed by men) in Kabuki, and so their choreography remained dance for women to be seen as women. Therefore, there is none of the kabuki-like devices to make a man look like a woman or to make their bodies look smaller in Inoue style dance.

So, that is why it has a stronger feeling to it isn't it? At the time of the founder and Inoue II, they had interaction with the puppet *yoruri* (Bunraku) that was popular in that day and adopted choreography from their puppet performance.

The essence of that puppet choreography is not to make the puppets move as puppets but to try to use the human body [of the puppeteer] to "give the puppet beauty in replicating human motion." I'm sorry if that wasn't said in a way that is easy to understand (laughs).

No, I do understand. It's an interchange of roles. In other words, it is not a process of becoming the puppet, but of getting the human (puppeteer) to take on the movements of a puppet impersonating a human, isn't it?

Yes. I sometimes get the feeling that Inoue II observed the movements of the puppet very well. When the movement of the puppet comes to a complete stop, it gives the puppet a dramatic weight. After the puppet stops there is a dramatic moment of pause, and she made that moment a part of her choreography. Because there are many places with those pauses, if the viewer doesn't know that that is a moment for them to use their imagination, they could end up just thinking, "What's going on here?" So, if they don't know the meaning of the pause, I think our Inoue style can be hard to understand.

Because Inoue II studied under Nomura Sanjiro of the Kongo school of Noh, another unique aspect of the Inoue school is that it has always been related to Noh.

Yes. Inoue III married Shinzo Katayama (Kurouemon Katayama VI), and Inoue IV married the grandson of Inoue III, Hiromichi Katayama (Kurouemon Katayama VIII), and also my mother, Inoue V married Tetsunojou Kanze, successor to the Tokyo Kanze school of Noh, which means that for three generations we have had a strong tie to the Kanze school of Noh. Since two schools of traditional performing arts have lived under the same roof for so long, My mother several times organized "Noh, Kyogen, Kyomai no Kai" performances with my uncle Kurouemon where she performed the same pieces as in Noh, such as *Aoi no ue* (*Lady Aoi*) and *Kantan* (*Pillow of Kantan*).

Inoue V has also danced the role of a nymph to Debussy's *The Afternoon of a Faun*(*) played by an orchestra.

I heard that there was a project to do a performance of classical Japanese dance

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**Bokushin no Gogo (Afternoon of a Faun)*

A production of the series “Japanese Classical Dance x Orchestra – Traditional Collaboration” produced by the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan theater, in which dance artists of the various schools of classical dance choreograph and stage classical ballet masterpieces including *Les Sylphides*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Petrushka*, *Afternoon of a Faun*, and *Bolero*. For this production the overall directing was done by Jusuke Hanayagi. Yachiyo Inoue V collaborated with the choreography for the nymph role with Jusuke choreographing for the Faun role and the two performing together.

Miyako Odori in Shunjuza
(Apr. 2017 at Kyoto Art Theater - Shunjuza)



Photos courtesy of Gion Koubu Kabukai
Photo :Hayashi Photo

Miyako Odori website
<http://www.miyako-odori.jp/english/index.html>

with orchestra music and the former Jusuke Hanayagi (now Jukei Hanayagi II) invited her to jointly choreograph dance to *The Afternoon of a Faun* and perform together. In 2015, there was a project to stage a dance to Ravel's *Bolero* at Sennyuji temple. And it was made possible with the conductor Tomomi Nishimoto whom my mother had known for some time conducting the orchestra.

Inoue V has done a number of innovative collaborations with other artists.

I believe it is a case of, after doing straight classical dance for so long, she wanted to flirt with other forms of art (laughs).

One of the things that the Inoue school has carried on [for generations] is the “Miyako Odori.” From 2015, you have become an instructor of Inoue school dance along with [your mother] Inoue V at the Gion Girls' Art School (Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen), a school for Maiko and Geiko of the Gion Koku district.

Unlike the more subdued dance done by Geisha for guests in the confines of [tatami] banquet rooms and the like, “Miyako Odori” is more lively entertainment type dance. We hear that at first it was performed at small rental tea-house rooms but, how we don't know, it came to be a form of dance performance that went through the four seasons in one stage with the backdrop changing without ever closing the stage curtain, and it continues to be performed like that today. It begins with a prologue-type part called the *Okiuta* with a backdrop of silver *fusuma* sliding door panels like a palace room, which we use because the Inoue school had its beginnings in a palace setting, so it is like a note of our history. It was certainly with the Miyako Odori that the Inoue school gained its name in the performing arts world, and it was with this that our school gained a firm connection to the Hanamachi pleasure quarters of Kyoto.

I have seen the Miyako Odori performed several times at the Kabu-renjo theater [its usual venue], but when the theater was undergoing renovations in 2017, it was performed in the Shunju-za theater in Kyoto University of Art and Design. The dimensions of this theater are completely different, and the lighting is brighter than usual, and the circular stage floor was turning at quite a speed. When I saw that, I thought that this must be the type of shocking entertainment thrill and vitality the Miyako Odori might have had at the time of Inoue III. Rather than saying it was a thing of refined beauty, at the time it must have been something of wild energy on display.

Thank you for saying so. Today, in the case of Kabuki and the like, a lot of new things are being used in the stage sets, etc., so each time we are thinking about how we could introduce surprising new elements. At the same time, we also want the audience to appreciate some of the slow movement that is typical of our style, so that element is included too.

So, it is a balance of the kind of positive tension that audiences seek today in order to feel that they have seen something entertaining and the something of the depth of the classical art, isn't it.

Yes. So my mother (Inoue V) always wants us to include one scene that has an

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Inoue-type quality. There are also times when we include a scene using something like a traditional *Jiuta* folk songs [of Kyoto], and we add different kinds of variations.

Although the Inoue style is the style used in the Gion Kobu district, there are other schools used in the other *Hanamachi* pleasure districts.

There have been subtle changes with the different eras, but now in the five Hanamachi districts there are the Onoe school of Pontocho district, the Wakayagi school of Miyakawacho district, the Fujima school of Gion-higashi, the Hanayagi school of Kamishichiken district and the Inoue school of Gion Kobu. At Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen the *Jikata* accompanist musicians (shamisen and singers) and Maiko and Geiko constantly coming for lessons until they quit the profession, and besides the dance department there are also *Kiyomoto* and *Tokiwazu* style *yoruri* narration, *Jiuta* ballad, and shamisen and *hayashi* festival music departments, and students also learn the arts of flower arrangement, tea ceremony and calligraphy. And there are schools like this in the other Hanamachi districts.

Among the styles of dance in Gion, the Inoue style is unique, isn't it?

Yes, I believe it is different perhaps. We teach our style of choreography, but there are many with an atmosphere that we can't imitate and is clearly "Geisha dance." Through what we teach with the Inoue choreography they come to dance in a style that is unique to the Geisha.

Beside teaching Maiko and Geiko, there is also a need to carry on the Inoue style as an art form. How is that done? And what is the present state of your school?

It is actually quite a situation. The other schools take on a lot of apprentices, but the Inoue school never expanded out of Gion, and it is only the very most accomplished apprentices who ever attain the position of teacher, and because the others don't feel they are sufficiently accomplished in the art, they don't take on their own apprentices. So, today, there are only six in our school who are allowed to teach, including three in their 80s (Kazuko, Masae and Kazue) who trained under Inoue IV, my mother (Inoue V) and her disciple, Yoko, and myself. So, we are truly a small school.

So, the six of you are the ones who train the Geiko and Maiko of Gion Kobu?

That's correct. The six of us teach about 65 of them.

I see, even though yours is such a unique school within the context of classical Japanese dance, it seems that it must be unbelievably difficult to carry it on as an art, isn't it? As the successor to this school, you must be concerned with three main things I would think. One is the job of teaching the art of the Hanamachi district, the next is how you open the Inoue school to the audience and the last is how to increase the number of core members, isn't it?

That's right. As far as outreach to the audience goes, I gave a lecture at the university recently and I began by asking them if they had seen performances of Japanese classical dance before. Of the 50 people in the audience, only one had. I thought this was a pretty bad situation. I have the feeling that I want it to be easy to understand,

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but in fact easily understood elements don't really fit with our dance; they simply aren't beautiful in dance.

For example, with *Jiuta* folk songs, the subject matter is largely love between a man and a woman, but when you consider whether you can dance to the songs of [popular pop singer] Kana Nishino ... I wonder? I wonder If it would be meaningful. If you are seeking ease of understanding, it is not easy to understand when you are using a fan to represent the action of handling a fishing pole, but would the answer be to dance using an actual fishing pole? If we went too far to try to make things easy for the audience, it would probably end up being a failure. I believe that leaving the unknown parts up to the viewer's imagination is probably the best way to enjoy dance. For that reason, I think it is important for us to make an effort to give the audience the prior knowledge of the dance that they will need to appreciate it.

As for how to carry on the tradition of the art in an Inoue style, it is a very big issue. Why have artists from such a small school been named Living National Treasures? Surely it is because Inoue IV carried on the art that have been established by the founder and Inoue II and Inoue III and was able to protect that tradition. Of course, it is partly due to the strengths and talent of Inoue IV, but it was also due to the smoothness of the process by which she carried on what had been built up by the founder and Inoue II and Inoue III. And I believe the most important element in this process was the relationship and interaction with the people of the [Gion] Hanamachi district.

In Gion today the teachers/performers are divided between the *jikata* accompanist musicians (shamisen and singers) and the *tachikata* dance specialists, and the *Jikata* have long carried on the art they learned from their elder sisters in their small working/performing spaces. In the Inoue school, the tempos of the *jiuta* and *nagauta* songs are different and so can the intonations of the melodies be, but they have carried on these traditions for us. I believe that it was because we had both of these ongoing traditions that Inoue IV as able to become a Living National Treasure. But now we have an insufficient number of *jikata* accompanist musicians, so I believe we face a time of difficulty ahead in that area as well. Now there are only about a dozen *jikata* people who are working and performing together with the Inoue school. In the past we also had [male] *gidayu* (*yoruri* recitation vocalists) working in the Inoue school, but now they are virtually gone. Now we have to invite *gidayu* or *itchu* (recitation performers of *itchubushi yoruri*) from outside for performances. This probably means that there will be an increasing number of pieces that we won't be able to perform in the future. In the past, we could have the *jiuta* performers come to play even at our shows for novice students, but now we have to rely increasingly on tapes of the music (accompaniment). Usually we can't use the recorded music sold commercially [for copyright reasons] at our performances, but fortunately we have lots of tapes left from when our own accompanists performed for us, so we take good care of the recordings we make now—although it is hard to keep up with the archiving work. In some cases we have left them for the university to archive, but in that case it is often difficult to access them readily when we need them.

In 2013, you began a group named the “Yoyo no Kai” to do your own personally organized productions and performances. It has become group that offers fine

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performances of refined and sophisticated Kyomai numbers by artists of a several generations, including Inoue V, her disciples Kazuko and Masae, and various Geiko.

I have plenty of opportunities to study with performances at public venues. But, I also want opportunities to show new audiences that there are sophisticated performers like me in the Inoue school (laughs). [Since it is my productions] perhaps it would be more meaningful if I performed alone, without my mother and the others, but I think it is also interesting to mount performances where the audience can see the dance of artists of other generations. And, for that reason, perhaps it will be good if we can also present dancers younger than me, down to small children as well.

From this year you have been teaching Japanese classical dance to younger people in the Performing Arts dept. of Kyoto University of Art and Design as a visiting instructor. What has that been like?

My original plan was to complete four introductory level *jiuta* pieces in the first semester, but we were able to complete only two. Perhaps I was a little too ambitious (laughs). Most of the students had never even worn a proper kimono, and many could not sit on their calves in the formal *seiza* sitting position, so we began with having them learn proper sitting and standing and bowing manners. But they can't do it initially. They are used to living with shoes on [unlike traditional life on *tatami* floors] so they don't normally use their toes and thus they can't apply strength with the forefoot.

What I am teaching is that there are certain forms (conventions of stances and movements) in Japanese classical dance. I wanted to begin by getting them to experience a traditional art form that has its prescribed conventions and restraints that they have to work within, rather than the type of free-form self-expression that these young people are used to pursuing their ideas in. I want to get them to realize that there can also be self-expression within convention-based movement that has a prescribed conclusion (framework), and I want them to reach the point where they can begin to think about that to some degree, but in fact, it is all most of them can do just to memorize the choreography. The ones who have had a little traditional dance experience try to bring a bit of their own originality to the movement, but I have to say that is not Inoue school style (laughs).

When you begin [classical] dance, you start to examine your own body (physicality). Even if it is not Kyomai, lessons are usually given on a one-to-one basis with just you and the teacher. Most of the students have no experience of a single person (teacher) closely watching the peculiarities of their individual body movement, and especially not having a teacher correct their specific movements. But in the classical training you will suddenly be told by the teacher, "You, your body (pose) is distorted." In my teaching too, I will often tell the students, "Your center is bent/twisted (not straight)," because I want them to have this experience of examining their own body (physicality).

For the second semester I am thinking of having the students learn the basis of one piece and then, using the famous basic music, *Sakura, Sakura*, I will let them choreograph their own dance to it freely. I want them to have the experience of trying to compose their own choreography to that piece based on the elementary knowledge of Kyomai they have gained.

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**Hisshi no patchi*

This is an expression made up to express the state of struggling extremely hard in the face of diversity. It is an expression used primarily in the Kansai region of Japan to express the ultimate state of desperate struggle.

As for yourself, as Yasuko Inoue, what kind of dance artist do you want to be?

I still have so much study I must do, so the first thing I must do is to correctly absorb all I can of the Inoue school's dance style. I'm still struggling with all my might, "*Hisshi no patchi*(*)" as we say here in Kyoto (laughs). When teaching, in the Inoue school we have a type of lesson where the teacher and disciple practice in front of a mirrored wall, so you have to teach the choreography looking at the mirror's reversed image, and even that still gets me confused sometimes (laughs).

Within the large framework of Japanese classical dance, there are many schools and styles, and while until now it may have been enough for each to concern themselves only with their own school, your generation will also have to think about how to bring attention and public interest to Japanese classical dance as a whole, won't you?

That's right. Even now, the number of members in our Japanese Classical Dance Association (Nihon Buyo Kyokai) is decreasing. Whereas until now our schools (styles) have existed separately, I believe that from now on we will have to communicate with each other across the boundaries of our individual schools. Although it requires some nerve for us to approach artists of other schools, I want to see us begin to take on the challenge of combining our strengths to work together on new joint stages (productions, performances). We are now working on a project that will have dance artists of my generation and the generation of teachers just above us tour with performances around ten shrines and temples around Kyoto.

Sort of like traveling performers?

Yes. We are still at the discussion stage with the artists I know, but one thing I would like to begin by going to Yasaka Shrine. It is only a small and specialized audience that comes to see Japanese classical dance performances, but if we can perform at the shrines and temples around the city, we will be able to show our art to the visitors from the general public who happen to be there, including visitors from overseas. I think it would be great to be able to use these venues to make an appeal for our classical dance. By the way, it is the dream of my teacher (and mother) Inoue V to be able to perform someday at the Kyoto Imperial Palace. Because the founder of our school danced at the palace of the retired Emperor at the Kyoto Imperial Gardens.

If you do performances outdoors at the shrines and temples, your audiences can combine the occasions with sightseeing as well. I will be a great sudden opening and release, won't it? (Laughs)

Yes, in spite of the fact that the Inoue school has always been working behind closed door for so long (laughs). I don't know how things will work out, but when you are young it is the time to take chance and make mistakes if you must, so I want to take on the challenge.

I look forward to the realization of this new plan of yours. Thank you so much for your time with us today.

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History of the Kyoto *Hanamachi* districts and the Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen school

In Kyoto today, there are Hanamachi in Gion Kobu, Miyakawacho, Pontocho, Kamishichiken, Gionhi-gashi (these are referred to as the Five Hanamachi) and the Hanamachi of Shimabara. In each of the Five Hanamachi there are places where the Geiko and Maiko are trained in and practice their performing arts (the study/training facilities in Gion Kobu and Miyakawacho are accredited as schools, and the schools (styles) of dance practiced in each Hanamachi is different; with the Kyomai Inoue school in Gion Kobu, the Wakayagi school of Miyakawacho district, the Onoe school of Pontocho district, the Hanayagi school of Kamishichiken district and the Fukima school in Gionhigashi), and each district has a *Kaburenjo* (performance theater) where the Geiko and Maiko give performance of their dance and music in the spring and autumn. Among these Hanamachi districts, especially famous is the Gion Kobu district with its charming locations such as lanes where people come to walk among the cherry blossoms, and it is here that the local Geiko and Maiko who have learned the Inoue style of dance at the Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen gather to perform the “Miyako Odori.”

The history of Kyoto’s Hanamachi districts goes back to the 16th century. In Japan there was long a policy of gathering licensed prostitutes in to confined quarters of the cities (establish licensed red-light districts) in order to prevent the presence of houses of prostitution and red-light districts from spoiling to overall atmosphere of the towns. This policy was started under the sponsorship of ruling warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1589 with the construction of the Nijoyanagi-cho pleasure quarter in Kyoto. Later the red-light district of Nijoyanagi-cho was moved to Rokujo Misujimachi. This became the first licensed pleasure quarter under the Tokugawa Bakufu government and was moved to Nishijin-yashiki Keiseimachi on the outskirts of the city in 1641, where it became commonly known as Shimabara. After that it practice became to have one licensed pleasure quarter (quarters of legal prostitution) in each of the major cities, as exemplified by Yoshiwara in Edo and Shinmachi in Osaka.

While officially there was only one licensed pleasure quarter in each city, that didn’t mean that some prostitution was not in fact conducted in other parts of the cities. There were establishments where the female employees also practiced prostitution, such as the *chatate-jo* of tea houses, the *yu-jo* of hot spring spas and the *meshimori onna* of inns. But while other cities continued to abide by the law of only one pleasure quarter per city, in the case of Kyoto, it was permitted for establishments outside of Shimabara to be licensed (on the condition that they paid license fees to Shimabara) to run houses of prostitution in places such as in front of the Gion-sha (today’s Yasaka Shrine) in the Gion district as a side business of tea houses, etc.

However, with the coming of the Meiji Restoration, the system and roles of these Hanamachi of Kyoto were changed. With the Restoration, the residence of the Emperor was moved from Kyoto to Tokyo, and fearing for the future of their city, the government of Kyoto initiated a number of countermeasures for

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the modernization of the city, known collectively as the “The Kyoto Measures.” One of these measures was the consolidation by district of the *machi-gumi* local citizen-operated governing bodies in to *bangumi* offices. For example, earlier than other parts of the country, Kyoto constructed what were called “Bangumi Elementary Schools” financed by money collected from the citizens of the district, and in addition to functioning as schools, these buildings would also house the local *bangumi* government offices.

As for the Hanamachi districts, two years prior to the Meiji government’s 1872 ordinance liberating all geisha and prostitutes, which ended the practice of indenturing women as Geisha or prostitutes against their will, the Municipality of Kyoto issued an ordinance eliminating the licensing of prostitution by Shimabara. With this, the issuing of new licenses to tea houses, etc. outside of Shimabara as houses of prostitution was prohibited and such premises already operating, each of the local *bangumi* was reissued licenses for operation as tea house companies, etc., under the direct governance of Kyoto Prefecture.

At the same time, “Nyokoba” facilities dedicated to the vocational aid and education of women were established in the various districts. As part of this policy, the Shimogyo Ward #15 where Gion is located (Ward Mayor: Jirouemon Sugiura, owner of the tea house “Ichiriki”) was one of the first to establish a company where liberated Geisha and prostitutes could get vocational training in such jobs as sewing and sericulture. Concurrently, requests were filed for large tracts of land formerly owned by the Meiji government, such as the grounds Kenniji, to be transferred to the Kyoto prefectural government, and eventually such land was allotted for the construction of similar vocational school facilities under the jurisdiction of the prefectural government, not only in Gion but in other [former] pleasure quarters throughout the Ward. These facilities were registered as companies to which all of the liberated Geisha and prostitutes became union members, thus establishing a new base of governance in the Hanamachi districts.

In 1871, Kyoto Prefecture called on the leading businesses of the city to come together to organize Japan’s first exposition. And in 1872, leading figures in the city came together to establish the Kyoto Exhibition Company, and under joint sponsorship with the prefectural government, it organized the 1st Kyoto Cultural Exhibition for the purpose of encouraging new business. As one of the attractions of this exhibition, performances of classical dance were put on by the liberated Geisha and prostitutes. What made this performance so unique and attractive was the choreography by Haruko Katayama (Yachiyo Inoue III) who was teaching dance in Gion. She choreographed it a large-group dance based on dances like the Kamenoko Odori dance of Ise Furuichi and using a stage designed to employ changing backdrops as the performance progressed without ever closing the stage curtain, and this became to roots of what was later came to be called the Miyako Odori. This event became the opportunity that connected the Inoue school of dance to the Gion district in a relationship that continues to this day.

With the success of the Miyako Odori among other factors, the women’s

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vocational Nyokoba company of Shimogyo Ward #15 received former Meiji government land in Gion to open the [Old] Kaburenjo theater as the venue for the Miyako Odori from the 2nd Kyoto Cultural Exhibition, after which the theater gradually became used increasingly for the training and rehearsing of public dance performances like the Miyako Odori. These events were followed by further community development projects such as the building of facilities for the production of tea and silk and the land renewal projects creating leased house districts and lanes for enjoying cherry blossom viewing and the like. In these ways, a unique movement developed in Gion in which prominent citizens and business owners of the Hanamachi district became members of the local company that could use large tracts of public land to promote community development and establish facilities for the vocational training and education of liberated Geisha and prostitutes. The effects of this system can be seen as the foundation of the cultural activities in classical arts that continues in Gion today.

The company's name was changed in 1881 to "Yasaka Nyokoba" and in 1902 it was given incorporated status as the foundation "Zaidan Hojin Yasaka Nyokoba." After World War II, in 1951, with the establishment of the Private School Act, the school was re-organized and licensed as the incorporate school "Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen."

The school continues to operate today in the same Gion Kobu district (part of which became independent in 1881 as Gion Otsubu and later changed its name to Gionhi-gashi) with joint ownership of the land it stands, and as urban development continued in the area, it became a school under the name "Gion Girls' Art School" where Maiko and Geiko study their arts (courses of study include dance, the song/narrative forms of *nagauta*, *Tokiwazu joruri*, *jiuta*, *kouta* and *kiyomoto*, *shamisen*, *Noh*, *narimono* musical performance, flower arrangement, tea ceremony, calligraphy and painting). In this capacity it is an important educational institution for the preservation of Hanamachi arts and culture.